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BEAUTY IN SHRUBS WITHOUT LEAVES

For fully six months of the year we who live in this area must look at shrubs without leaves. And yet how seldom does this fact receive any consideration at the time shrubbery is being selected for our landscape plantings. Instead, major attention is more apt to be directed to floral features, fruit effects and perhaps foliage, with little if any thought given to other details. This ignores such important characteristics as habit of growth, twig texture, winter color, persistent fruit, prominent buds and other special interests.

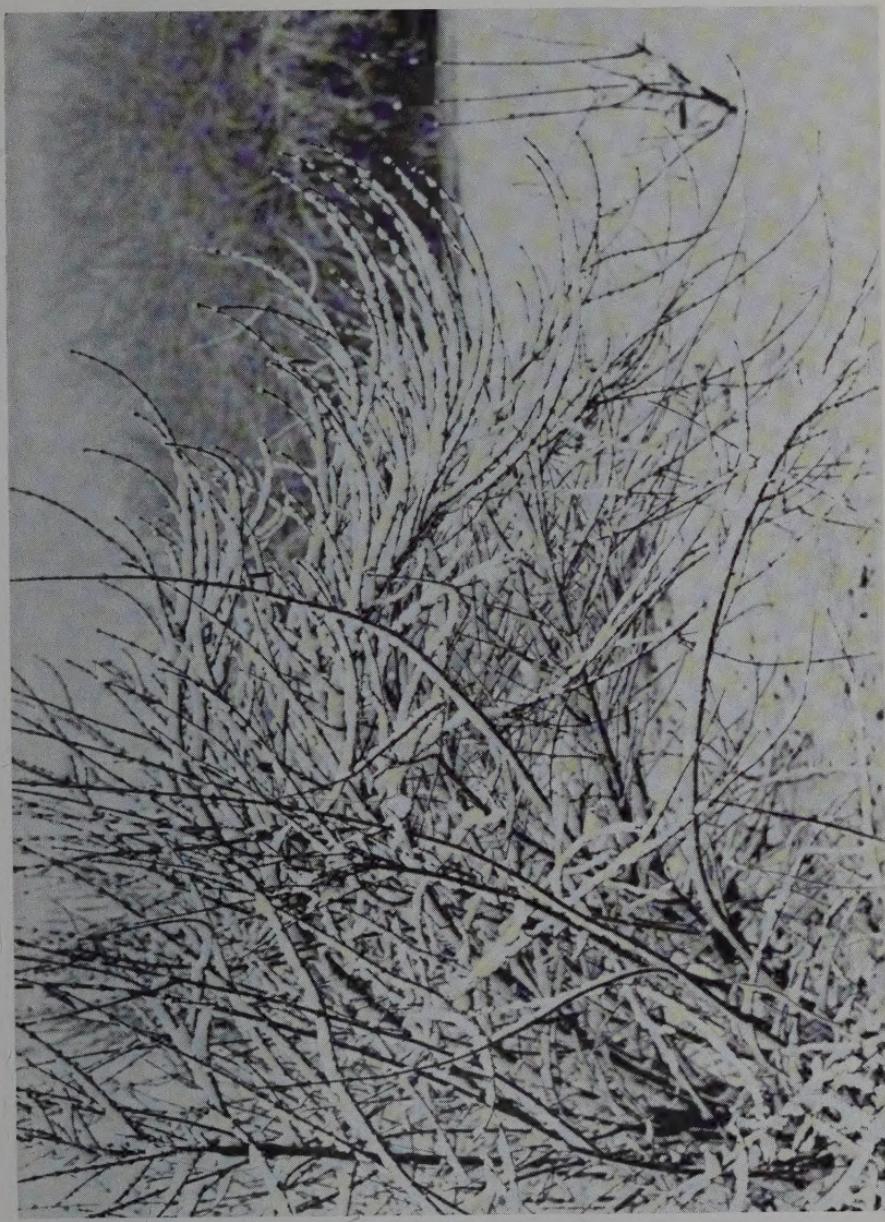
Winter is by far the best time to study the architecture of our shrubs, for without leaves their manner of growth, or to use the landscape architectural term, "habit", is most clearly revealed. It is then, too, that the features determining character show up, the direction in which the stems or branches grow, their number, their spacing and the way they are arranged. Upright or spreading, narrow or broad, formal or picturesque and open or dense, each anatomical form is an expression of the plant's individuality. Not infrequently there is also in its make up a hint as to how it may be used most advantageously as an ornamental.

While an interesting habit of growth is noticeable whatever the season, during the winter months it is the most appreciated characteristic a shrub may possess. And, if it is pleasing to look at without benefit of flowers, foliage or fruit, it is almost certain to remain attractive throughout the rest of the year.

Flowering Dogwood, (*Cornus florida*), with its graceful build-up of horizontally tiered branches always seems to represent the ultimate in structural beauty, but an observing eye will reveal other plants equally picturesque and more generally adaptable. The Pagoda Dogwood (*Cornus alternifolia*) is one of these, a hardier relative of essentially the same height and habit. Still another Cornel, the Japanese Corneliancherry Dogwood (*C. officinalis*) is a broader spreading bush whose greenish brown branches are studded with fat round flower buds. Multiple-trunked, erect branched Tree Lilac (*Syringa amurensis japonica*) is another distinctive tall grower, somewhat coarse textured but of interesting branch pattern.

It develops a broad top and has smooth cherry-like bark. Most Magnolia species are arborescent, but one, the shrubby Star Magnolia (*M. stellata*), displays a pleasing, rather horizontal branch arrangement and distinctive light gray bark. Its prominent furry coated buds give promise of beauty to come. Of the many flowering crabapples whose structural framework places them in the picturesque class only the Sargent Crab (*Malus Sargenti*) can rightly be classed as shrubby. A pygmy by crab standards, it stays well within the 7 or 8 foot height limit although its tapering horizontal branches usually spread much farther. A harsh climate limits use of the Japanese Maples to but a few forms of which the Purpleleaf variety (*Acer palmatum atropurpureum*) is the most dependable. It exhibits a typical oriental quality. While the Buckthorns seem coarse by comparison, one cannot fail to be impressed by the anatomy of the Daurian species (*Rhamnus davurica*), spreading, round-headed shrub whose dark, rigid and usually spiny branches are a study in texture. Most of the Euonymus have structural interest in winter, too, especially the flat topped corky stemmed Winged Euonymus (*E. alata*) and its more compact variety (*E. alata compacta*). The twigs of both have a textural quality found in no other shrub. Our native Witchhazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*) is another shrub of winter distinction, its branching habit often showing a pleasing irregularity. Persistent seed capsules give the bare twigs a knobby appearance. It is not surprising to find among the versatile Viburnums several choice winter interest subjects, and of them all the Doublefile Viburnum (*V. tomentosum*) exemplifies most perfectly the ultimate in picturesque growth. Although eventually rounded in contour, its branching habit remains flatly horizontal. The Blackhaw Viburnum (*V. prunifolium*) and its Southern counterpart (*V. rufidulum*), likewise show a horizontal tendency, but to a lesser degree. A more undulating form characterizes the Siebold Viburnum (*V. Sieboldii*), taller, more erect Japanese species of merit for specimen planting. The privets are not as a rule considered outstanding structurally, being mostly stiffly erect growers. The familiar Regels Border Privet (*Ligustrum obtusifolium Regelianum*) deviates, however, in having horizontally spreading branches of attractive disposition. The Hupeh and Slender Cotoneasters (*C. hupehensis* and *C. tenuipes*) also contribute much to the leafless landscape, the former with slender brown branches spreading outward in horizontal tiers, the latter with long arching stems curving and recurring in an interesting interlacing pattern. Dwarf Cotoneasters present a winter picture most appreciated at close range. Both the Early and Cranberry Cotoneasters (*C. adpressa praecox* and *C. apiculata*) show the mounded habit typical of the procumbent types. There is a definite regularity in the spacing of their short branchlets which arch forward in a fishbone-like arrangement. Some of the Japanese Quinces are also noteworthy anatomically, the Knaphill Scarlet Quince (*Chaenomeles lagenaria Knaphill Scarlet*) having a particularly interesting irregular framework. Each branch is a Japanese arrangement in itself. Japanesque also describes the Cutleaf Staghorn Sumac (*Rhus typhina laciiniata*), shapely variety whose habit suggests an irregularity created by timberline influences.

Color in branch and twig provides one of winter's most conspicuous and cheerful effects and it is among the Cornel and Willow clans that we find the most generous contributors. Shrubs with yellow stems are



Snow emphasizes the regimented sweep of budded Forsythia branches (*Forsythia intermedia spectabilis*).

best represented by the Greentwig Dogwood (*Cornus sanguinea viridisima*), a variety with greenish or lemon yellow bark, and the brighter, yellow stemmed form of the Redosier Dogwood (*C. stolonifera flaviramea*). In reds there is the familiar Siberian Dogwood (*C. alba sibirica*) with its showy red stems, the darker toned Bailey Dogwood (*C. Baileyi*) and the Bloodtwig Dogwood (*C. sanguinea*), whose branches show deeper purplish red tones. The Gray Dogwood (*C. racemosa*), in contrast, has grayish stems which at this season are enhanced by a lavender frostiness. Most of the colorful willows are tree-like, although a few such as the Dwarf Purpleosier (*Salix purpurea nana*) and Prairie Willow (*Salix humilis*) remain shrubby. For contrast, the bright green branches of low growing Japanese Kerria (*Kerria japonica*) are useful. The new growth of both the European and Winterberry Euonymus (*E. europaea* and *E. bungeana*) also has a greenish cast. The polished brown stems of some of the Cotoneasters deserve mention, too, as do the conspicuous frosty red canes of the native Blackcap Raspberry (*Rubus occidentalis*), arching branched inhabitant of roadsides and woodland openings.

Persistent fruit adds appreciably to the winter value of a number of shrubs, prolonging color interest long after the normal season of fruit effectiveness has past. Red Chokeberry (*Aronia arbutifolia*) and Winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*), are two red berried sorts which if favored by ideal weather conditions and left untouched by birds will furnish interest over a long period. Japanese and Korean Barberry (*Berberis Thunbergii* and *B. koreana*) and the European and American Cranberry-bush Viburnums (*Viburnum opulus* and *V. trilobum*), all bright red, are less apt to be influenced by these factors. Birds do like the persistent Chinese red hips of the Japanese Rose (*Rosa multiflora*) however. For an orange effect one may usually depend on the translucent berries of the Common Seabuckthorn (*Hippophae rhamnoides*), for gray on the aromatic Bayberry (*Myrica pensylvanica*), for dark blue on the Regel's Border Privet (*Ligustrum obtusifolium Regelianum*), and for blue black on the Buckthorns (*Rhamnus* in variety). Occasionally Snowberry (*Symphoricarpos albus*) fruits may weather the freezes, too, adding white to winter's color palette.

Effects of a more subtle nature result from the less conspicuous features, corky or exfoliating bark, prominent thorns, tenacious floral or fruit parts, catkins and precocious flower buds. Unless planted so that attention is focused on them, however, such characteristics are often times overlooked. The Winged Euonymus (*E. alata*), its Korean form (*E. alata* Korean type) and the Compact Winged Euonymus (*E. alata compacta*) all display in their corky gray brown wings a unique textural quality especially appreciated in winter. Snow doubles its effectiveness. Peeling or exfoliating bark is a distinctive feature of another group of shrubs, the aptly named Ninebarks (*Physocarpus* in variety), Beautybush (*Kolkwitzia amabilis*), Kentucky Viburnum (*Viburnum molle*), Japanese Cornelancherry Dogwood (*Cornus officinalis*), and the semi-arborescent Peking Lilac (*Syringa pekinensis*), whose polished brown bark resembles cherry.

Thorns, in addition to serving the protective function for which they were created, also have in some instances an aesthetic value. The grooved stems of the Cutleaf Barberry (*Berberis circumserrata*), for example, are beset with sharp one to five parted yellowish brown spines attractive both in coloring and texture. Rose thorns may also add a decorative touch, as in the case of the sharp reddish tan prickles of the Primrose Rose (*Rosa primula*), the dense bristles coating the stems of the Scotch Roses (*Rosa spinosissima*) and the mossiness of the old fashioned Moss Roses (*R. centifolia muscosa*). The olive green branches of some of the Pea Shrubs (*Caragana*) are also armed with spines and the stout spurs of the Buckthorns (*Rhamnus*) add textural interest to their sturdy dark colored branches.

One cannot minimize the prolonged floral interest of such subjects as the Hydrangeas, either, shrubs whose florets often persist through the most trying winters. True, time changes their coloring to soft tans and browns, but with little sacrifice of interest. Common Snowhill Hydrangea (*Hydrangea arboreascens grandiflora*) is one of the most effective.

Promise of blossom to come is the attraction showing up in still another group of shrubs, those whose flower buds are formed during the preceding growing season. The flat, rounded gray buds of the Flowering Dogwood (*C. florida*) so prominently arranged at the ends of upturned branchlets are among the most conspicuous, although those of the Cornelancherry Dogwood (*Cornus mas*) and its Japanese counterpart (*Cornus officinalis*), also deserve a fair share of attention. Round, olive green in color and smaller than a garden pea, they are clustered thickly on the branches. The folded soft woolly buds of the Vernal Witchhazel (*Hamamelis vernalis*) appear ready to open at a moments notice, and so they do at the slightest suggestion of warmth, sometimes in January. Willow catkins need little mention for everyone appreciates their early beauty. And, like the Vernal Witchhazel their response to warmth is almost instantaneous. The season's advance is likewise marked by a lengthening of the slender catkins of our native Hazelnut (*Corylus americana*) and its European relative (*C. avellana*). Once their winter rigidity is limbered they droop most gracefully from the smooth branches.

Numerous other winter interest shrubs might have been mentioned, but it is hoped these will serve to arouse an awareness of their existence and to stimulate a sense of appreciation of their values.

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